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POL 23-8
ABDUCTIONS,
KIDNAPPINGS

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason

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EGAN

INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

TERRORISTS MURDER US CONSULAR AGENT IN ARGENTINA

The *Montoneros*, a militant left-wing group which formed part of the Peronist movement until September 1974 when it went underground, kidnapped the US Consular Agent in Cordoba, John Patrič Egan, on February 26. Two days later, after their demands were not met, they left Egan's body wrapped in a guerrilla banner on a dirt road on the outskirts of the city. The *Montoneros* were also responsible for the murder of the Argentine Chief of Police in October, 1974, and for several kidnappings and murders subsequently. They had not before attacked US officials. In April, 1974, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), another Argentine left-wing terrorist group, abducted and shot a USIS officer in Cordoba.

Egan was a retired US businessman living in Cordoba. He became US Consular Agent in 1973. Despite his protest to Cordoba police authorities, guards had been removed from his office/residence several nights before the abduction. The Provincial Governor maintained that the guards had been needed to participate in a search for assassins who had killed a policeman in that precinct.

Montoneros Demanded Release of Prisoners

A *Montonero* communique of February 27 demanded as a condition for Egan's release that the GOA demonstrate publicly that four captured *Montonero* members were alive and being treated well. The communique gave the GOA until the evening of February 28 to "produce" the four on television, radio or other media. Foreign Minister Vignes and Ambassador Orfila in Washington advised us, however, that the individuals in

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question were not in custody. Nonetheless, there are unconfirmed reports that at least two of the named individuals were in custody, one of whom reportedly had been severely tortured. Two others were reportedly killed months ago by a right-wing terrorist group. The guerrillas later added three other names to the list - one in a letter to Ambassador Hill written by the abductors but signed by Egan which arrived after Egan's execution, and two others in a message found with Egan's body.

The nature of the demands and the manner in which they were made strongly suggest that the *Montoneros* intended to kill Egan from the outset to achieve propaganda objectives. If so, they, or other left-wing terrorist groups, may strike again at US officials in an effort to embarrass the Government and force more humane treatment for captured co-militants.

Police Search to No Avail

Police and Army units in Cordoba launched an extensive dragnet in an effort to locate the hideout where Egan was held. We proposed several stratagems which, if adopted, conceivably might have forestalled, or at least postponed the execution, but the Argentine Government apparently had no contact with the terrorists. The Government publicly refused to negotiate with the terrorists.

US Seeks To Clarify Events

We are seeking to clarify the events in Cordoba with specific regard to the removal of police guards from the Consular Agency. Our previous agreement to retain the Agency in Cordoba had been predicated on GOA assurances that guards would be provided. The Embassy in Buenos Aires has put special security measures into effect. The number of official US personnel in Buenos Aires has been sharply reduced over the past year. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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